Report on erosion of soil

†1183. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has been warned by presenting a report on behalf of research institutes that productivity of agricultural land in the country is reducing due to erosion of soil;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

(c) the assessment with regard to annual average rate of erosion of soil of agriculture land in every State of the country; and

(d) the steps Government has taken to check the erosion of soil in year 2006 and 2007?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per Vision - 2025 document of Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute, Dehradun, nearly 44% of the total area in the country has erosion rates more than the permissible limit of 10 tonnes/ha/year. Accordingly, over 5.3 billion tonnes of soil and around 8.4 million tonnes of plant nutrients are lost every year through water erosion. Rough estimates show agricultural loss from soil erosion to the tune of Rs. 5200—8400 crores per annum.

(c) The average annual soil erosion rates (t/ha/year) computed for twelve States so far are as follows:—

Andhra Pradesh (13.09), Assam (22.64), Bihar (7.26), Chhattisgarh (19.43), Gujarat (8.16), Karnataka (12.22), M.P. (18.60), Maharashtra (12.68), Orissa (11.29), Rajasthan (15.90), Tripura (15.13) and W. Bengal (8.34).

(d) The Government is implementing location specific erosion control measures development by Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute, Dehradun through different integrated watershed management programmes run by various agencies. The institute also organized regular training courses for field functionaries and farmers in this regard.

Increasing rice consumption

1184. SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the country's rice consumption is increasing 1 to 1.5 million tonnes every year and the Planning Commission estimates that by 2020, the demand for rice would exceed 120 million tonnes;

(b) whether the production of rice has declined from 93.34 million tonnes in 2001-02 to 92.76 million tonnes last year;

(c) whether rapid conversion of crop land to non-farm use, inadequate irrigation facilities and lack of new and healthy seeds have led to a slowdown of rice production; and

(d) if so, how Government proposes to meet the demand of rice and to check price rise of rice?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) On the basis of the monthly per capita quantities of consumption reported in the National Sample Survey 61st Round Report on "Household Consumption of Various Goods and Services in India, 2004-05" and the population projections given by the Office of the Registrar General of India, the consumption of rice in the country including seed, feed and wastage was estimated at 85.77 million tonnes during 2004-05 which rose to 87.01 million tonnes during 2005-06 and to 88.25 million tonnes during 2006-07. This shows that the consumption of rice is increasing by 1.24 million tonnes every year. Based on the said approach, the country's rice requirement is projected to be 104 million tonnes by 2020-21.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Production of rice depends on a variety of factors including land under the crop, availability of irrigation, weather, fertilizers, quality seed and prices. In order to increase the productivity and production of rice in the country a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Rice Based Cropping Systems Areas" (ICDP-Rice) is in place from October, 2000. Under the scheme, assistance is provided for propagation of improved/hybrid production technology, integrated pest management, transfer of technology, farm implements, installation of sprinkler irrigation system, varietal replacement and production of certified seeds.

In order to increase the production of rice further, recently a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "National Food Security Mission" (NFSM) has also been launched in the country from 2007-08. It aims at increasing the production of rice by 10 million tonnes by the end of the Eleventh Plan, *i.e.*, by 2011-12 through area increase and productivity enhancement in targeted districts.

To check the rise in price of a commodity including rice, the Government resorts to measures like restricting export, allowing import and reducing tariff rates besides announcing remunerative prices and bonuses to the farmers for increasing its availability.

Special Agriculture Zones

1185. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in a bid to prevent prime farmland from being used for industrial purposes, the Government is mulling to set up Special Agriculture Zones (SAZs) which would provide sustainable relief to distressed farmers;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government has already identified 31 such districts in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) No, Sir. There is no such proposal for setting up Special Agriculture Zones (SAZs) for providing relief to distressed farmers in the country. However, Government of India has identified 31 districts falling in 4 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra for implementation of various programmes relating to watershed development, irrigation projects, supply of inputs, credit, horticulture, rainwater harvesting and construction of check dams to support distressed farmers under Prime Minister's Relief Package, as per details given below:—